

The Knowledge Bank at The Ohio State University

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THOS. E. FRENCH

By ELGAR BROWN

OF the more illustrious alumni of the Ohio State University, Professor Thomas E. French, head of the Department of Engineering Drawing, ranks foremost in the field of engineering education. In other fields Professor French is equally well known, being termed "Daddy" of the Ohio Stadium, recognized as a consulting engineer, granted a position high in the field of authors of textbooks, and elected president of the Faculty Club. Professor French has also served the interests of the University unusually well as president of the Ohio State University Athletic Board, having been appointed to that position in 1912.

Mr. French, born in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1871, obtained his first position in the field of engineering with the Smith-Vaile Company of Dayton, Ohio (1888-1891), first as a draftsman and then as chief draftsman. While in Dayton, Mr. French also acted as instructor of drawing in the Dayton Y. M. C. A. eve-

ning school. In 1891 Mr. French, leaving his Dayton position, enrolled in the College of Engineering at Ohio State, working in his spare time upon patent drawings in order to pay part of his college expenses, and graduating in 1895 with a degree in mechanical engineering.

During his enrollment in the University, Mr. French was not only an excellent student, but also a motivating force in many campus activities. He is a member of Sigma Xi, Phi Beta Kappa, Tau Beta Pi, Tau Sigma Delta, and Phi Gamma Delta.

After graduation, Mr. French, in his new capacity as a member of the teaching staff, continued his college activities practice by taking an important part in the programs of professional societies and clubs. He holds membership in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the Society for Promotion of Engineering Education, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 1901 he was appointed Associate Professor of Architecture and Drawing, and in 1906 he was promoted to the position of Professor of Engineering Drawing. He has held that position from that time.

As an author of textbooks, Professor French is perhaps unequalled by anyone else in his field in the world. The following quotation is taken from the *Ohio State University Monthly*, February, 1935, p. 148: "Not only is he famous as the 'father of the Stadium' idea, but his textbook, *A Manual of Engineering Drawing*, has taken the name of Professor Thomas E. French, Mech. E., '95 into 400 colleges and universities throughout the world. It is the most widely used text on engineering extant." The fifth edition of this book is now used by engineering students in schools throughout the world, and has been translated into several different languages. Other textbooks by Professor French include *The Essentials of Lettering* (with Robert Meiklejohn), 1912; *Agricultural Drawing and the Design of Farm Structures* (with F. W. Ives), 1915; *Mechanical Drawing for High Schools* (with C. L. Svensen), 1919, revised edition, 1934; and *Lessons in Lettering* (with W. D. Turnbull), 1921. These books are all among the leading texts in their respective fields. The workbook, *Engineering Drawing Sheets*, by French and McCully (1936) has marked still another step forward in engineering drawing instruction.

Professor French has always been deeply interested in the development of the athletic program at Ohio State University. In 1912 he was made president of the Ohio State University Athletic Board. In this position he was one of the first to realize the possibilities for development of a well organized athletic program at the University. He was one of the most ardent boosters of the plan for construction of the Ohio Stadium. The following statement appeared in the *Ohio State University Monthly*, June, 1929, p. 395.

"Head of the Department of Architectural Drawing at the University, Professor French has served his Alma Mater in many ways. . . . He is also responsible somewhat for the crowded conditions of the campus during the football season, having served on the Stadium Committee at the time of the construction of the mammoth horseshoe, and being known as the 'Daddy' of the Stadium."

In addition to his excellent record in the development of the athletic program at Ohio State, Professor French is the representative of the University to the Intercollegiate Conference of Faculty Representatives. His position as chairman of the Committee to Nominate Rules Committees of the National Collegiate Athletic Committee has given him an unusual opportunity to become personally acquainted with the more famous personalities of the athletic world.

Professor French is also a seasoned globe trotter having visited the four corners of the earth with his daughter, Janet, as travelling companion. In 1932 they toured South America and were entertained by the alumni at Buenos Aires. In 1935, they spent six months in Japan and China, being entertained while there by the local graduates of the University. They spent the summer of 1937 in making a very picturesque tour of Mexico.

In addition to his many other activities, Professor French follows several very interesting hobbies. His collection of etchings is very well known, and he is director of the American College Society of Print Collectors. As a more profitable sort of pastime, he designs bookplates. He has designed many of those used in the Ohio State University Library as well as in many other libraries of the country. His stamp and puzzle collections have also attained quite huge proportions.

In addition to his executive duties as the head of the drawing department at the University, Professor French also teaches several classes in drawing design. It is not enough to say that he is the leading authority in the field of engineering drawing in the world today because his interests are so varied, but it may also be said that whatever he does, no matter how far separated from his chosen field of engineering, he does well.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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More: "Everytime I kiss you, it makes me a better man."

Less: "Well, you don't have to try to get to heaven the first night."

When a very, very, fat young woman walked into the room, four fellows over by the punch bowl started laughing and pointing. "There they go," she muttered angrily, "having fun at my expense again."